

Excommunication.

The term excommunication, sometimes called the ban, in a religious point of view can be of two kinds. Man may excommunicate himself from the body, by his own voluntary act; or he may be excommunicated by the body. Either way is destruction, synonymous with the term perish. It means the end of the excommunicant's career in the church. When done by an ecclesiastical body, it is the result of church government, and is done by an assumed power: and this power is what is alleged to be questionable. Now the writer asks a little indulgence of the reader in referring to some Scripture that he believes to be applicable to this destructive power of the church; of which the Brethren were disgusted long ago, even before the division took place: and it is prayerfully asked that the Brethren would seriously consider this most tyrannical of all Ecclesiastical questions, before applying the torch to their victims. It makes all kinds of difference in what humor a man is when he sits in judgment over his brother. David was much more lenient towards Absalom, who did sin, than he was towards Uriah who did not sin. Man is not capable to judge man in those things that God reserved for himself to judge.

Before quoting authority from the Scripture, I will make a few more suggestions. If church government is an anomaly, then excommunication is an anomaly also. A writer in one of our periodicals not long since, in substance made the following declaration; *the worldly governments use the sword to enforce their decrees, but we use expulsion.* It is this sword, or cat-a-nine-tails that is considered in this communication. Alexander Mack says in his ground searching answers; "The ban is an essential and necessary thing in the church * no church of Christ could exist without it." But Gruber contends in his questions that "Christ did not enforce and exercise it (the ban) even on the wicked Judas," Mack might have said here as he did at another place, viz; "For before our baptism while we are were yet among the Pietists, we were not otherwise taught, who were claimed as great saints. Hence we had much contention until we gave up our imbibed errors. Mack is considered good authority; but he learned his theology from the same teacher that we or Gruber learned his, and therefore this notion about the ban might also be an imbibed error. The Apostle Paul defines and limits his authority in 2 Corinthians, 8th, verse.

"For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for destruction." Also the 13 chap. 10th: "Therefore I write these things, being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." Here the authority of the church or the Elders is defined to edification, and not to destruction. Let us follow this word destruction a little further and see if it belongs to the body, or to the individual himself. In 2 Peter 3:16, speaking of Paul's writings: "As also in all his epistles, speaking of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Paul tells us that many walk, whose end is destruction. Phil. 3:18-19. "For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." Thess. 5:3. "The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, * * taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." 2 Thess. 1:7-8-9. "There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." 2 Peter 1:1.

A person would indeed be an object of pity, that would harbor the thought that this destruction was to be done by the church. It would be distressing to the writer, to have such thoughts. It could only assure one that he was guilty of bringing in these 'damnable heresies' spoken of in the last quotation. The advocates of unlimited church government have so learned Christ, and no arguments, neither

height nor depth, can separate them from their faith or notions: and no matter what Paul or Peter say at other places they rely wholly on 1 Cor. 5:4-5. Paul says, 'When ye are gathered together * * to deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' Well the writer confesses his inability to wade through all the deep water found in the Scriptures. The glory found in this quotation for excommunication might be differently understood, if a person stood on the opposite side of the majority. The next sentence says, "your glorying is not good." What their glorying was is a mere matter of speculation. The Epistolary writings are dealing very much with local matters, and because we do not know the circumstances as they existed there, we find some things hard to be understood. It cannot be accepted that they gloried in the character here referred to—A fornicator. 'Deliver such an one unto Satan.' How will they go about this business? Will it be left to a vote and the result announced, that a majority of one decided to deliver him over to Satan; and the Elder announce that the devil has got him; is this what is meant by Paul? But suppose one vote was lacking of a majority, what then; would he still be a child of God? 'O, consistency thou art a jewel!' But a true philosopher will hardly be satisfied with such proceedings: he wants something more tangible. Can we not make something more tangible out of this Scripture? What is meant by delivering unto Satan? Is it not fair to presume that it means unto the wicked, those that do the works of darkness, and know not the Lord Jesus, but crucified him; stoned Stephen to death, and were at this very time persecuting and imprisoning the saints upon any pretext? And is it not meant 'the power of Satan,' as described in Acts 26:18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God?'

Tradition tells us that all the Apostles were put to death except John. Were they not also delivered or at least fallen into the hands of Satan for the destruction of the flesh? Can it not be reasonable accepted that the above construction is more likely the correct one? and that on account of the wicked persecution that was going on at that time against the Christians, that so wrought upon them, that they secreted their brethren, which would be very reasonable from the persecutors that was just then determined to destroy, the plant of Christianity? And that this same person spoken of by Paul was one among the number shielded from an outraging populace? Such a crime would hardly escape a mob in our own age. 'When ye are gathered together * * to deliver such an one unto Satan.' Paul did not approve of shielding such an one for some reason, and it is apparent that they (the disciples) were not able to keep themselves from destruction; it would be vain glory for them to save some one not worth saving, 'that the spirit may be saved.' By coming together they could come to an understanding that no one should harbor him any more, would virtually deliver the fornicator to the power of Satan. Excommunication is simply a sword, a power of destruction; and the tyrant's weapon. Mahomed says 'Christ came to persuade men but I come to force men to God.' We have too many Mahomedes among us 'It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.' Matt. 18:12. "The Roman Catholics believe most strongly in an ecclesiastical power; but long experience brought about an almost abandonment of this power of excommunication. Their members commit all kinds of crimes; and yet they are not excommunicated: their spiritual adviser—the priests—stand by them by the side of the hangman, and point the criminal to 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world:' they continue until the vital spark has fled. Yet there zeal, their devotion, their earnestness and sincerity is not questioned by the Protestant world on account of their leniency.

Ever since the organization of the Brethren church, we made warfare against this little devil, and are we to surrender at last. God forbid.

DANIEL MILLER.

Sidney, Ind., Dec. 27, 1888.

"Inspiration of the Scriptures."

BY H. P. BRINKWORTH.

Whilst we are well aware this subject has been written upon, and commented by abler pens than ours, it may possibly not be amiss in this day of doubt, skepticism, and infidelity to advance a few ideas bearing on the divine authenticity of the "Book of books."

We must bear in mind that the Scriptures—the Bible—is the sole warrant of the existence of the Christian society. The facts on which the Christian system is based. The doctrines constituting some, are authoritatively recorded nowhere else. If therefore the Bible be not true, they are entertaining beliefs which have not a shadow of support. are forming plans in which they must meet with bitter disappointment; for the Christian rests the fortunes of his soul on the authority of the Bible.

Why then do we receive this Book? Why take as a rule of faith? these are subjects of vital import, and are always alive and to many minds unanswered. Opposition comes from a quarter which makes it injurious in its effects. The spirit of Rationalism has invaded the church, and among professing Christians, even ministers adopt loose views on this fundamental question, and give utterance to sentiments seriously damaging to the faith of God's chosen people.

If the doctrine of inspiration is one worthy our faith, there must be evidence for it. The Bible comes to us as readers, as a series of literary documents. Let us look a moment at their historic credibility. Is the Pentateuch the production of its rejected author, or a forgery? In order to find out the assailed points read from Horne, Havenrick, John Rawlinson and many others, see how they have been met and vindicated. Study the Old Testament; it will show that the Jews as early as the reign of David were confident. Moses wrote the first five books of the Scriptures. So deeply was this belief rooted in the national mind that political differences, even when culminating in seism were not strong enough to induce either party to cast discredit on the books which bear the name of their Lawgiver. Though the statue-book of Judah, being the Pentateuch, yet the ten tribes showed no disposition to set aside its authority as we learn from the fact that the Samaritans received it alone of all the Old Testament Scriptures, because it was the book of the law of Moses. It has been alleged, writing was not known at that time, or, if known, writing materials were not at hand for so large a work under the circumstance of a wilderness journey.

This objection has been met by recent discoveries of Babylonian bricks, and Egyptian papyruses which are estimated to be coeval with Moses. It also has been said that if Moses had written the book, he would not have spoken of himself in the third person: we reply, parallel passages may be cited from the writings of Homer and Chancer, of Cæsar and Xenophen, and even of the Apostle Paul. These confirm the testimony of the Hebrew people. Again, had it been a forgery, it could not have now the confidence of the nation so as to have been regarded by them in the light of a sacred trust; embodying their history, their genealogies, their laws, and their religious institutions. Yet it must have been written by Moses, or be the work of an imposter.

That Moses wrote them is evident, from the fact an eye-witness wrote them; see how careful the attention paid to the record of places, battles, marches &c. The minute circumstances which he weaves in the narrative, corroborate the belief he was a participator in the transactions, and wrote from personal knowledge.

If written by an historian they would be systematically arraigned, but, not so with these writings; but while the events recorded were in progress so we find them on the page of inspiration. Another point, the use of archaic forms of expression, and of words of Egyptian origin; the adhesion to the government and social life of the Egyptians—particularly mentioning the practice of embalming the dead—prove conclusively the writer must have lived in a time as early as Moses, and enjoyed a familiarity with foreign customs which is best explained by the circumstances attending the education and early life of the Jewish Lawgiver.

(To be continued.)